MAHATMA GANDHI

(*The Father of our Nation*)

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We are still in the enveloping shroud of the great tragedy that has deprived us—and indeed the whole mankind—of Mahatmaji—our priceless possession, the light and soul of our land, the architect of our freedom and the world apostle of peace and goodwill. Can anything assuage the poignant anguish of the grieving millions? It is a strange irony of fate that one who preached and rigorously practised *ahimsa* in its purest and rarest form and whose nature recoiled from even the very thought and suggestion of violence of any kind should have become the victim of such a foul and outrageous attack, so brutal and cold-blooded. It would be a lasting shame to us that a country which produced a Gandhiji had also given birth to an assassin so depraved as to kill an aged saint on his way to offer prayers. We can, in our helplessness, only exclaim, 'Inscrutable are the ways of Providence!'

The Gandhian Philosophy had demonstrated, right in the midst of the era of atomic bombs, that non-violence could produce more spectacular results than senseless carnage on the battlefield. To what else could be ascribed the wonderful and glorious revolution that overnight changed India from an abject dependency into a full-fledged independent and free dominion? Is there any parallel in history to such a wonderful happening?

Gandhiji might have been a rebel, but he was a rebel who always respected law and order and insisted on his followers scrupulously observing the same respect for law and order.

The whole country is feeling the void created by the death of the Father of the Nation. But his martyrdom would not go in vain. The ideal *Rama Rajyam* that he desired should reign in India would be easy of accomplishment if only we would remember the great sacrifice made by that saint and be true to his teachings, and put into practice, each in his own way, however humble, his principles of toleration, love and non-violence. The voice that has been unceasingly preaching the gospel of universal peace and love has been ruthlessly stilled by the hand of the assassin but the clarion message of that Man of God will ever remain ringing in our ears.

REFERENCE IN THE HIGH COURT.

On Monday the 2nd February, the Chief Justice, Mr. P. V. Rajamannar and all the other Judges of the High Court, assembled together in the biggest Court Hall to pay their homage to Mahatma Gandhi. The Chief Justice with the other Judges standing on the dais, made a most touching reference which was listened to silently by the Advocates assembled and standing in al solemnity. In the course of his reference, the Chief Justice, said:

"We are assembled here to-day to mourn the loss of the greatest man whom India has produced in recent history and was one of the world's greatest men of our times. From the highest to the lowest in the land, irrespective of caste, creed and colour, every one has been stricken with grief at the tragic news of his passing away and we join in the universal mourning.

All that was earthly and mortal of Gandhiji has perished; but the spiritual and immortal qualities of his soul, his life and teachings, these cannot perish—these, weapons cannot pierce and fire cannot burn '*Nainam Chindanthi Sastrani Nainam Dahathi Pavakah*'. These will remain a priceless part of our common inheritance and will be an abiding source of inspiration to us.

May God, the Almighty, grant us the fortitude in this hour of anguish; may He grant us the strength to carry on his mission of peace and goodwill on earth.

We express our profound sorrow and as a mark of respect, we shall stand for a minute in silence and then the Courts will adjourn for the day."

The entire gathering observed reverential silence for a minute and then dispersed.

HOMAGE PAID BY THE ADVOCATES' ASSOCIATION.

A special meeting of the Madras Advocates' Association was held on the 2nd February and the following resolution was passed:

"This meeting of the Madras Advocates held under the auspices of the Madras Advocates' Association, expresses its sense of deepest grief over the death at the hands of an assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. The services he rendered to humanity in general and India in particular are too vast to be recorded in words. He was not only the architect of Indian Freedom, but through the advocacy and pursuit of truth and non-violence, he showed the right path to humanity to reach the goal of peace and goodwill among the nations of the world. This meeting pays its respectful homage to his momory and pledges itself to the successful pursuit of the cause for which he lived and died."

Sri P. Somasundaram, the President of the Association, in moving the resolution said:

"We have assembled in this solemn and sombre atmosphere to express our deep sense of sorrow and shame on the death of Mahatma Gandhi at the hands of an assassin. Let us banish all bitterness from our minds over the foul deed, lest we offend his disembodied spirit, for, all his life he acted up to the truth of the saying of the Lord, "Vengeance is mine". Rightly has he been called the Father of the Nation, for every Indian, be he a Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Parsi or Mussalman, felt that he had in him an ideal father, notwithstanding the ideological differences with some.

Of the great many teachers who are ordained by God to correct the erring man, he is one. It is too soon to appraise the influence of his message of Non-violence and Truth. We are too near the ground to see the horizon. The life of Jesus of Nazareth furnishes to us the closest parallel with one difference that his actions and teachings were directed also at and to the Government of the day and he did not hesitate to ask people not to render unto Cæser that which is Cæser's when Cæser is wrong and in this respect he is in the company of those great Chinese philosophers Confucius and Lao Tao.

As a religious teacher coming after the great saint of Dakshineswar Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, his appeal to the masses is to the true spirit of Sanatana Dharma shorn of its later day excrescences in the form of untouchability and rigours of the caste system which have atrophied the life lines of our great religion and culture.

His politics and state-craft are applied religion. This happy marriage between religion and politics in its broader sense is the unique feature of his life and his teachings and his contribution to the world thought, for he realised early in life that all the misery and the ills from which we Indians and perhaps the entire human race have been suffering is on account of the divorce between religion and politics.

As a true follower of Sanatana Dharma with its emphasis on tolerance and Swadharma, he is a true Christian and I venture to think, without offending the susceptibilities of Mussalmans whose great friend he was, a true Mussalman. He appealed to the Christians to rediscover Christ and to Mussalmans the teachings of the great Prophet of Arabia, as then and only then will there be the reign of the Freedoms recorded and unrecorded in the United Nations Charter of which we hear so much in theory and see so little in practice. It is a matter of some comfort that his teachings and his life have begun to permeate the course of international thought and politics. If the wise men of the nations who control their destinies are to avert another and perhaps more devastating catastrophe, there is only one course and that is the course which was preached from time to time, by Gautama Buddha, by Jesus Christ and by Mahatmaji. Have we not witnessed the powerful effect of his doctrine illustrated by his recent fast a miracle, in an age of unbelief and atomic power. Let us continue to honour the pledge given to him. He lived to see the achievement of many things dear to him, the emancipation of India from foreign rule, though not yet its emancipation from communal and religious hatreds. He would have seen even this accomplished but for some unfortunate events over which neither he nor his followers have any control.

What is his teaching and what is the source of his hold on the three hundred and fifty millions, the poor and the disinherited of the earth as also the princes and the millionaires of India? It can be summed up in the following extracts from Isavasyopanishad, the quitessence of all religions and ethics, his greatness and influence lay not merely in preaching them which so many do without profit to themselves or to their listeners but in living up to them in his day to day life. I may be pardoned for quoting them for he was never tired of repeating them.

ईशावास्यं इदं सर्वं यत् किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्वित् धनम् ॥

"By the Lord is encompassed all this whatsoever changing there is in this changing world. Through the renunciation of that (world) mayest thou enjoy. Covetest thou not anyone's riches."

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेत् शतं समाः ।
एवं त्वयि न अन्यथा इतो अस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥

"Ever performing works here one may wish to live a hundred years. In this way—not otherwise than this it is—to thee that art a man—the deed adheres not."

यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मा एव अभूत् विजानतः ।
तत्र को मोहः कः शोकः एकत्वं अनुपश्यतः ॥

"Where to one who knows all beings are verily identical with one's own self, what delusion and what sorrow can there be to him who has seen the identity."

Truly he gave his life ransom for the many, for to the last man who brought about, by his dastardly act, his Nirvana and by his last word, he returned good for evil. We miss his presence and his kindly light shed in diverse ways. To us who were removed from him by the physical barriers of distance is denied the daily rich refreshment served through his congregational prayers. He has surveyed in his daily teachings and writings all our problems domestic and national. He has never hesitated to rebuke the tallest among us for their lapses and thus elevated the lowliest of the low, the Bhangi and the Chamar and the highest among the high. It may interest you to know that at one time he was one of our fraternity though subsequently disbarred on the ground perhaps that he is too good to remain in it. By his emphasis on mercy and compassion and not so much on rights, he is one of the greatest of judges. Though physically dead, he lives if only we live up to a fraction of his teachings.

May his spirit guide and help us in the difficult tasks and times that lie ahead of us.

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

OM SANTI SANTI SANTI.

JAI HIND."